

## **Why do the School Committee and Administration want to move preK into the Lincoln School?**

The Lincoln Preschool is not like the other preschools in Town. It exists to provide early intervention special education services.

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) has evolved over the years since its early beginnings in 1975, and establishes the educational right that each child who has a disability and needs special education and related services will receive a free and appropriate public education (*FAPE*). The current statute requires public schools to provide FAPE services for children with special needs as young as 2 years 9 months, and requires districts and states to establish a system of early identification of children with possible disabilities.

The Lincoln Public Schools have a strong tradition of meeting all special education needs in an inclusionary environment, as much as possible, and has had an early childhood education for more than three decades. The current integrated model of the Lincoln Preschool was established in 2006 to meet the needs of young students with special needs. The Lincoln Preschool operates in the Hartwell Building and serves children from both the Lincoln and Hanscom campuses.

The integrated model insures that 6-9 children with special needs are schooled in a classroom with a matching number of more typically-developing children, all under the supervision of three adults with special training. The program is four hours long and includes: the typical preschool activities; separate art, music and wellness/PE sessions; enrichment & field trips; and specialized instruction to address the special education needs of the students. The program uses a number of classrooms, related spaces and the Multi-purpose Room in the Hartwell Building, as well as the playgrounds found in the Hartwell complex.

The Lincoln Preschool is part of the district and belongs with the rest of the elementary school. For the same reasons that the 1994 campaign successfully moved the kindergarten classrooms from the Hartwell Building to the Smith Building, the School Committee would like to move the Lincoln Preschool as part of the project under consideration by the Town.

- Locating the Preschool in the main school building will increase time on learning. The separate art, music and wellness/PE sessions are typically 30 minutes long and take place in the Smith Building. The preschoolers require 30 minutes to dress for the weather and to walk over for these 30-minute sessions, and 30 minutes for the return. Consequently, at least 3 hours each week is taken away from time on learning, for movement to activities.
- Walking across the campus is difficult or impossible for some preschoolers due to their needs. The concept of FAPE does not allow us to exclude certain students from the separate art, music and wellness/PE sessions, as difficult as the travel may be for them, so complex arrangements to allow for the cross-campus travel are required. What may seem like a short and enjoyable walk in the outdoors for a healthy adult may pose an extreme difficulty for some of our students.

Locating the Preschool in the main school building will simplify these travel arrangements for the most-challenged students.

- Locating the Preschool in the main school building will increase faculty efficiency. The specialist teachers who provide related services such as remedial speech and language, OT/PT or nursing services must walk back and forth across the campus. While this is

not a hardship to the teachers, it does increase the amount of unproductive time in their day, reduces the time available to provide services to all students and makes the scheduling of the support staff more complex.

- Locating the Preschool in the Lincoln School will free up other space in the main school building by relocating District functions currently housed in the Lincoln School. Two Lincoln Preschool classrooms will move to the new Hanscom Primary School upon its completion in the summer of 2019. Moving the remaining Lincoln Preschool classrooms into the main school building will allow the District data, IT and similar support functions to join their supervisor in the Hartwell Building by relocating out of space they currently occupy in the Lincoln School.
- Preschool students benefit from attending their community school, which allows opportunities for multiage experiences.